San José State University
Department of English & Comparative Literature
ENGL 71, Intro to Creative Writing
Spring 2016

Instructor: Nick Taylor
Office Location: Center for Steinbeck Studies, MLK Library 5th Floor
Telephone: 408-808-2067
Email: nicholas.taylor@sjsu.edu
Office Hours: Mon/Weds 2:00pm - 3:00pm and by appointment.
Class Days/Time: Mon/Weds 9:00am - 10:15am
Classroom: Clark 306

Course Description
Introduction to Creative Writing (English 71) is a 3-unit lower-division course offered in accordance with the University’s General Education Program Guidelines to fulfill Core General Education requirements in the Letters area of Humanities & the Arts (Area C2).

In this course we will read, discuss, and write poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. The course will be taught using a combination of discussion and writing workshops. In the discussion, published works of creative writing will be read closely and analyzed. In the writing workshops, creative work by class members will be analyzed and critiqued for revision.

Student Learning Objectives
SLO 1 - Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric.
SLO 3 - Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject.

Required Texts
- Reed Magazine, Volume 68 (2015 edition). Reed is the campus literary journal and will be available to purchase in class from a Reed staff member.
- Photocopied poetry handout

Writing Assignments

Poetry
- A self-portrait poem
- A poem containing sensory images and concrete details
- A metaphor poem (also known as a “conceit” poem)
- A villanelle

Fiction
- Character sketch (2pp)
- Scene (2-4pp)
- Short story (4-10pp)
Creative Nonfiction
- Memoir/personal essay (2-4pp)
- Work essay (2-4pp)
- Travel essay (2-4pp)

Final Portfolio
- Revised versions of all writing assignments
- Responses to attendance at two Bay Area literary readings

Assignment Format
All material handed in should be typed and double-spaced with page numbers. Multi-page assignments must be stapled. Your name, the assignment title, and the date should be included at the top of the first page.

Attending Readings / Lectures
You are required to attend two readings by poets or prose writers presented on the SJSU campus or elsewhere. The Bay Area is one of the world's great literary regions, where seven days a week one can attend a reading by a renowned writer at a bookstore, college, community center, or library. Readings are listed in the Sunday editions of the San Jose Mercury News and The San Francisco Chronicle, and in Metro. After attending each reading, you will write a brief response (1-2pp) to include in your final portfolio. You may respond to any aspect of the reading, for example the speaker, the venue, the material performed, or the Q&A with the audience.

Here are some of the readings being offered on campus this semester:

Weds, February 10, 7:00pm, MLK 225/229
Ann Packer (fiction) reading and booksigning

Tues, March 8, 7:00pm, MLK 225/229
Cristina Garcia (fiction) reading and booksigning

Weds, April 6, 7:00pm, MLK 225/229
Andre Dubus III (fiction) reading and booksigning

Thurs, April 7, 1:30pm, MLK 225/229
Andre Dubus III (fiction) in conversation with Cathleen Miller

Weds, April 13, 7:00pm, MLK 590 (Steinbeck Center)
Steinbeck Fellows reading with Candace Eros Diaz (fiction), Jennie Lin (fiction), Gabriel Thompson (nonfiction)

Thurs, May 5, 5:00pm, location TBA
U.S. Poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera reading and booksigning

Monday, May 9, 7:00pm, MLK 225/229
Paul Douglass and Julia Markus (nonfiction) reading and booksigning
**Extra Credit Assignments**

For extra credit you can attend at up to two more fiction readings and write responses to include in your final portfolio.

**Class Workshop Procedures**

For each unit (poetry, fiction, nonfiction) I will divide the class into four groups of approximately six students each. Your workshop group will consist of different students each unit, so you will get to read work by all of your classmates. Every time you turn in a piece of writing, you will bring enough copies for everyone in your workshop group and your teacher and yourself (eight copies, usually). We will critique the pieces at home (writing directly on the manuscripts) and discuss them in workshop groups during the following class period. At the end of the discussion, you will get to keep the seven or so marked-up copies of your work.

So what do you comment on? You have two responsibilities. The first is to indicate what you got out of the story, poem, or essay. What's your interpretation of it? If the piece were in the textbook, what would you say about it? This helps the writer understand what came across and what didn't. The second responsibility is to suggest avenues for improvement. How can the writer make this story better? Often this requires putting yourself in the writer's shoes. Remember that you can help a fellow writer with thoughtful commentary even if you would not have chosen the same topic or style in your own work.

In a workshop, writers must feel safe sharing their work with the group. Please keep your critiques confined to the work, not the author. Hostile, threatening, or personal criticism will not be tolerated.

**Grading**

Grades will be based on the quality and quantity of writing you do as well as the quality and constructiveness of the criticism offered during the workshops and class discussions.

Creative writing, though subject to the instructor's individual subjectivity, can be evaluated according to general standards used to determine how well a piece of writing works. These include: 1) Textual and/or technical competence and eloquence. 2) Imaginative risk. 3) Energy and freshness of language. 4) Effective use of metaphor and other forms of figurative language. 5) Clarity and precision of detail. 6) Capacity for mixed feelings and uncertainty. 7) Effective use of grammar, syntax, rhythm; also meter, rhyme, and other elements of poetic style and form. 8) Naturalness and believability. 9) Appropriateness of style to subject. 10) Compelling audience interest.

Final grades will be the product of the following factors:

- Poetry                20%
- Non-fiction            20%
- Fiction               20%
- Final Portfolio (incl. literary events) 20%
- Class participation (incl. reading quizzes) 20%

Grades given conform to the English Department and university grading policy. The Department of English is committed to the differential grading scale as defined in the official SJSU Catalog.
Grading System). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A = excellent; B = above average; C = average; D = below average; F = failure.

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT GRADING STATEMENT: In English Department courses, instructors comment on and grade the quality of writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All your writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs.

Schedule and Assignments

This class meets every Monday and Wednesday, starting on Monday, February 1. The last class is Monday, May 16. Class will not be held on March 28 or 30 (SJSU Spring Recess). There is no final exam. Instead, on the last day of class, you will submit a final portfolio.

Reading assignments meet SLO #1, writing assignments SLO #3.

Reed = Reed Magazine 2015
BANRR = Best American Nonrequired Reading 2014
Handout = Photocopied poetry handout

Mon, Feb 1

Topic
Introduction; still write

Wed, Feb 3

Topic
Self portrait poems

Reading Due
Adam Zagajewski, “Self Portrait” (Handout)
Linda Pastan, “Self Portrait” (Handout)

Mon, Feb 8

Writing Due
Self portrait poem

Topic
Sensory images and concrete details

Reading Due
Lucie Brock-Broido, “Two Poems” (BANRR 181)
Ali Liebegott, “Shift #6” (BANRR 197)
Matthew Dickman, “Sidewalk Poem” (BANRR 86)
Kyle G. Dargan, “The Robots Are Coming” (BANRR 134)

Wed, Feb 10

Topic
Workshop self portrait poems
Mon, Feb 15

**Topic**
More on sensory images and concrete details

**Reading Due**
Mary Elizabeth Parker, “Jar on an Island Not in Tennessee” (*Reed* 99)
Sandra Chavez Johnson, “The Steps of Self-Exam” (*Reed* 103)
Valentina Cano, “Yellow” (*Reed* 108)

Wed, Feb 17

**Writing Due**
Imagery poem

**Topic**
Metaphor or Conceit Poems

**Reading Due**
John McKernan, “A Ninety Three Year Old Woman Was Run Over…” (*Reed* 100)
Robert Black, “Er!kah92” (*Reed* 111)
Emily Dickinson, “‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers” (Handout)
Marsha de la O, “Under the Lemon Tree” (Handout)

Mon, Feb 22

**Topic**
Workshop imagery poem; more on metaphor poems

**Reading Due**
Rae Armantrout, “Exit Row” (Handout)
Sandra M. Castillo, “Letter to Yeni on Peering into Her Life” (Handout)
Billy Collins, “Litany” (Handout)

Wed, Feb 24

**Writing Due**
Conceit poem

**Topic**
Structured poetry; the villanelle

**Reading Due**
“Poetic Form: Villanelle” (Handout)
Dylan Thomas, “Do not go gentle into that good night” (Handout)
Elizabeth Bishop, “One Art” (Handout)

Mon, Feb 29

**Topic**
Workshop conceit poem; more on villanelle
**Reading Due**
Sylvia Plath, “Mad Girl’s Love Song” (Handout)
Dan Lechay, “Ghost Villanelle” (Handout)

**Wed, Mar 2**

**Writing Due**
Villanelle

**Topic**
FICTION UNIT BEGINS; listen to “Healthy Start” by Etgar Keret

**Mon, Mar 7**

**Topic**
Workshop villanelle; elements of narrative; character

**Reading Due**
Adam Johnson, “Nirvana” (*BANRR 326*)

**Wed, Mar 9**

**Topic**
More on character

**Reading Due**
Allison Grace Myers, “Conditions” (*Reed 3*)
Karen Pullen, “Side Effects” (*Reed 23*)

**Mon, Mar 14**

**Writing Due**
Character sketch

**Topic**
Conflict and scene

**Reading Due**
Louise Marburg, “The Narrow Rim” (*Reed 53*)

**Wed, Mar 16**

**Topic**
Workshop character sketch; more on conflict

**Reading Due**
Amoz Oz, “Two Women” (*BANRR 88*)

**Mon, Mar 21**

**Writing Due**
Scene
**Topic**
Point of View

**Reading Due**
Andrew Foster Altschul, “Embarazada” (*BANRR* 136)

**Wed, Mar 23**

**Topic**
Workshop scene; setting; working with material

**Reading Due**
V.V. Ganeshananthan, “K Becomes K” (*BANRR* 287)
Michael Erickson, “Snow Geese” (*Reed* 32)

**Mon, Mar 28**
No Class – SJSU Spring Recess

**Wed, Mar 30**
No Class – SJSU Spring Recess

**Mon, Apr 4**

**Writing Due**
Short story

**Topic**
NONFICTION UNIT BEGINS; listen to David Sedaris, “Santaland Diaries”

**Wed, Apr 6**

**Topic**
Workshop short story

**Mon, Apr 11**

**Topic**
Memoir / personal essays

**Reading Due**
Joshua Davis, “Just a Race” (*Reed* 150)
Doan-Trang Nguyen, “Suitcase Full of Dresses” (*Reed* 141)

**Wed, Apr 13**

**Topic**
More on memoir

**Reading Due**
Andrew Lam, “Dear TC” (*Reed* 192)
Maia Morgan, “The Saltwater Twin” (*BANRR* 317)
Mon, Apr 18

Writing Due
Memoir/personal essay

Topic
Writing about work

Reading Due
Karen Maner, “Hugo” (*BANRR* 44)

Wed, Apr 20

Topic
Workshop memoir; discuss work essay assignment

Mon, Apr 25

Writing Due
Work essay

Topic
Travel writing

Reading Due
Tom Pyun, “Seven Pills” (*Reed* 162)
Janine di Giovanni, “Seven Days in Syria” (only section 1, “Hossam,” *BANRR* 94-99)

Wed, Apr 27

Topic
Workshop work essay; discuss travel essay assignment

Mon, May 2

Writing Due
Travel essay

Topic
Hybrid forms

Reading Due
Beth Roddy, “Single Worst Book” (*Reed* 133)
Yumi Sakugawa, “Have Cake and Tea with Your Demons” (*BANRR* 216)

Wed, May 4

Topic
Workshop travel essay
Mon, May 9

**Topic**
Revision and submitting work for publication; discuss final portfolio

Wed, May 11

**Topic**
Profile

**Reading Due**

Mon, May 16

**Writing Due**
Final portfolio

**Academic Honesty**
Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San José State University and the University’s Academic Integrity Policy, requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The Policy on academic integrity can be found at: http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/.

**Avoiding Plagiarism**
Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of somebody else’s words or ideas and is considered an instance of academic dishonesty that instructors must report. You commit plagiarism by:
- buying, stealing, or borrowing a paper (or story)
- hiring someone to write a paper (or story)
- building on someone’s ideas without providing a citation
- copying from another source or using a source too closely when paraphrasing

In other words, **submit only your own work.**

**Peer Connections**
Peer Connections is an on-campus center that provides peer tutoring for San José State University students. They offer assistance with writing, and if you feel you need intensive help beyond what I can provide during office hours, please request a writing tutor. Peer Connections has two locations on SJSU's main campus: in the Student Services Center (SSC) 600, on the corner of 10th and San Fernando (inside the 10th Street parking garage building), and in the Academic Success Center in Clark Hall, on the first floor next to the Computer Lab.

**Disabilities Policy**
If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities register with the DRC to establish a record of their disability.